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ABSTRACT

The Helpful Entry Level Skills Checklist was designed to assist preschool teachers in selecting functional skills that children (including children with disabilities) may need to make a successful transition into the public schools. These skills, for the most part, deal with attending, compliance, ability to follow directions, turn taking, ability to follow classroom routines and rules, and the ability to function independently. The entry level skills are those survival skills, or social and behavioral skills, that are necessary for a child to function successfully in the next school environment. The checklist is divided into sections for classroom rules, work skills, communication skills, social behavior skills, and self-management skills. The checklist is to be used as a guide for teaching young children skills that lead to independence, rather than as a prerequisite for entry into a public school program. A rationale for development of the checklist and instructions for administering the assessment are provided, in addition to a copy of the checklist. (JDD)

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HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST - REVISED MANUAL

HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST REVISED EDITION

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Project STEPS
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Lexington, KY

EC 300787

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HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS

PURPOSE OF THE HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS

The HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST was designed to assist preschool teachers in selecting functional skills that children may need in order to make a successful transition into the public schools. These skills, for the most part, deal with attending, compliance, ability to follow directions, turn taking, ability to follow classroom routines and rules, and the ability of a child to function independently. The ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS are defined as those survival skills, or social and behavioral skills, that are necessary for a child to function successfully in the next school environment. While the acquisition of these skills is NOT a requirement for placement in any public school program, it is hoped that the acquisition of these skills will help children in their adjustment in their next school environment and will facilitate their placement in the least restrictive environment possible.

The HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST is not intended to take the place of the language, motor, cognitive and pre-academic skills currently being taught in the preschool. Nor, as previously stated, is the goal to insure that all children have these skills as prerequisites for specific program placement. Rather, it is a goal to provide the child with the optimal number of skills possible.

Many of the skills listed on the HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST are currently being addressed at the preschool level. However, a systematic way of determining the expectations of the local public school teachers has not been in place. On one hand, it is not possible to determine a specific set of functional skills appropriate for all preschool children entering the public schools considering the individual strengths and weaknesses of the children and the various programs they will be entering. On the other hand, it is possible to determine some skills that are common and desirable for most children.

The HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST developed by Project STEPS reflects the opinion of a sampling of Fayette County, Kentucky, teachers, both in special education and in regular education. These skills, with some modifications based upon the recommendations of preschool teachers, parents and professionals, are seen as the most critical for facilitating a child's success as he/she makes the transition from the preschool to the public schools in the Lexington, Kentucky area.

In summary, the HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST offers a systematic way of recording and identifying specific functional skills for children going through the transition process. They are to be used as a guide for teaching young children skills that lead to independence, rather than as a prerequisite for entry into a public school program.

RATIONALE

Research (Vincent, Salisbury, Walter, Brown, & Gruenewald, 1980; Fowler, 1980; Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989; Zigler, 1985) shows that many children who experience failure in kindergarten or first grade have difficulty with the

social/behavioral skill areas rather than with the pre-academic areas. A two year study conducted by Vincent and Associates in Madison Wisconsin, in the late 70's looked at teachers perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of children placed in their programs from preschool programs. The area teachers were asked to critique included pre-academic, language, motor, and social/survival skills. The greatest number of both strengths and weaknesses were in the social/survival skill areas. These findings were consistent for both years of the study. The teachers were also asked to identify skills they thought children should have upon entering their class. Here again, the majority of skills centered around the social/survival areas rather than the pre-academic, language and motor areas.

Vincent (1980) also considered the placement of children with handicapping conditions. It was found that when children consistently exhibited appropriate social/survival skills, their chances of being mainstreamed with their normal peers increased. Vincent (1980) did not overlook the importance of the developmental skills area, but rather stressed the importance of these entry level skills being taught in conjunction with the normal curriculum used in the preschool. This study further indicated that this teaching process should be initiated several years before children enter the public schools. Since it is impossible and undesirable to predict a child's placement several years in advance, the teaching of these skills should be incorporated with all children who are enrolled in early childhood/special education programs. This study suggested that even the more severely handicapped children should be taught as many entry level skills as possible. If the data document that a child has some of these skills, it may be possible to further document the appropriateness of integration with non-handicapped children.

Vincent (1980) went on to suggest that the terminal objective from teaching entry level skills should be that children attain the level expected of regular kindergarten children in mid year. Hopefully, this will ensure the children to be able to function for several months without experiencing failure. Even for the more severely involved children who are unable to meet criteria, it might ensure that they would be placed in programs designed for the less handicapped student.

ADMINISTERING THE HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST

Within 30 days of enrollment in a preschool program, each child should be pretested. During the first few weeks of enrollment in a program, the teacher should observe the child to determine the presence/absence of the stated skills. The instrument should be used as a checklist, not a formal instrument for assessing skills.

The HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST, which can be administered in approximately 5-10 minutes per child, is completed by using the following response guidelines.

Yes - The behavior is well established. The child performs the skill independently or with occasional prompts. In the yes column the following may be used as prompt symbols:

M = Model Prompt
V = Verbal Prompt
P = Physical Prompt

No - The behavior has not been observed or is seen as a significant problem for the child.

Inconsistent/Emerging - The behavior is emerging or is exhibited only on occasion.

A "comment" section is provided for the teacher to indicate adaptations, concerns and/or reasons why the child might not exhibit this skill. For example, when assessing Communication Skill #2 (Communicated own needs/preferences) consider that a non-verbal child may be able to indicate his/her needs by signing or using an augmentative communication system. In this case, mark the skill "yes" and in the comment section indicate how the child communicates.

After administering the checklist, the teacher should identify those skills that are most likely to interfere with the child's successful transition. The skill number should be placed in the Target Skills section of the checklist for each of the five categories. These are the skills that should be taught during the school year. Stress should be placed on those skills that are most critical for the child. Many of the other skills will be incorporated into the preschool curriculum by way of incidental teaching.

The first page of the checklist contains identifying information about the child and the child's program. Space is also provided for target skills to be summarized from pre, mid and post tests. A summary sheet of all the skills included in the HELS-R Checklist is provided so that it can be attached to a copy of the first page and sent to families and/or other staff members or agencies working with the child.

During family conferences, share the checklist with parents. Discuss the purpose and importance of the checklist. With the family, target skills as goals for the child's transition year and include them on the child's IFSP/IEP. When appropriate give the family suggestions for facilitating the acquisition of these skills within the home environment.

MIDYEAR EVALUATION

The checklist provides an opportunity for the teacher to re-assess the entry level skills at mid-year. The checklist should be administered to determine the progress and allow the teacher to update goals for the child.

POST-TEST EVALUATION

During the last month of school or when a child leaves a program, administer the post-test of the HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST. The same guidelines for administering the pre-test should be followed. The form itself will reflect an achievement of the skill. Any discussion of a child's progress can be included in a final summary or as a narrative statement written by the teacher and attached to the checklist.

During the final parent conference, review the checklist along with other components of the child's IFSP/IEP. Give the parents a copy of the checklist and suggestions for fostering independence.

FOLLOW-UP

It is suggested that a copy of the HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST be sent to the child's receiving teacher. This may be included in a follow-up packet prepared by the preschool. Educational summaries, therapy summaries, work samples, current evaluation

the preschool. Educational summaries, therapy summaries, work samples, current evaluation results and other pertinent information may also be included. The child's parent may take the packet to the receiving teacher or the preschool may send the packet through the school system.

REFERENCES

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Vincent, L.J., Salisbury, C., Walter, G., Brown, P., Gruenewald, L., & Powers, M. (1980). Program evaluation and curricular development in early childhood special education: Criterion of the next environment. In W. Sailor, B. Wilcox, & L. Brown (Eds.), *Methods of instruction for severly handicapped students* (pp.303-328). Baltimore: Brookes

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HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST
REVISED EDITION

CHILD'S NAME: _____

PARENT'S NAME(S): _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

PROGRAM: _____

TEACHER: _____

Pretest Date: _____

Target Skill Numbers:

Classroom Rules	____	____	____	____	____	____
Work Skills	____	____	____	____	____	____
Communication	____	____	____	____	____	____
Social Behavior	____	____	____	____	____	____
Self Management	____	____	____	____	____	____

Mid Year Date: _____

Target Skill Numbers:

Classroom Rules	____	____	____	____	____	____
Work Skills	____	____	____	____	____	____
Communication	____	____	____	____	____	____
Social Behavior	____	____	____	____	____	____
Self Management	____	____	____	____	____	____

Post Test Date: _____

Target Skill Numbers:

Classroom Rules	____	____	____	____	____	____
Work Skills	____	____	____	____	____	____
Communication	____	____	____	____	____	____
Social Behavior	____	____	____	____	____	____
Self Management	____	____	____	____	____	____

Project STEPS
Child Development Centers of the Bluegrass, Inc.
Lexington, KY

PROJECT STEPS HELPFUL ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS CHECKLIST

CHILD'S NAME: _____

PERSON COMPLETING FORM: _____

SKILL	PRETEST DATE:			MIDYEAR DATE:			POST TEST DATE:		
CLASSROOM RULES	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E
1. Walks rather than runs indoors									
2. Waits quietly in line									
3. Sits or waits appropriately									
4. Complies with simple directions provided to a group									
5. Makes transition from one activity to another with minimal assistance									
6. Uses appropriate behaviors to get teacher (staff) attention when necessary									
7. Replaces material, cleans up own activity area									
8. Stays in own space for activities									
9. Stays with group outside classroom									

Comments:

Target Skill #(s): _____ _____ _____

WORK SKILLS	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E
1. Refrains from disturbing the activity of others									
2. Stops activity when given direction "stop"									
3. Works independently on developmentally appropriate material									
4. Completes tasks when given developmentally appropriate material									
5. Follows simple directions related to tasks									
6. Engages in developmentally appropriate activities for 1-3-5-10-15 minutes									
7. Waits until directions are completed to begin activities									

Comments:

Target Skill #(s): _____ _____ _____

KEY: V = VERBAL PROMPT / GUIDANCE
M = MODEL PROMPT / GUIDANCE
P = PHYSICAL PROMPT / GUIDANCE

I/E = INCONSISTENT OR EMERGING

CHILD'S NAME: _____

SKILL	PRETEST DATE:			MIDYEAR DATE:			POST TEST DATE:		
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E
1. Comes to adult when signaled									
2. Communicates own needs and preferences									
3. Answers questions about self/family, name, address, age, birthdate, parents' name									
4. Attends to peer or adult who is talking to a group									

Comments:

Target Skill #(s): _____ _____ _____ _____

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR SKILLS	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E
1. Responds positively to social recognition and reinforcement									
2. Modifies behavior when provided with verbal direction									
3. Follows school rules									
4. Separates from parents and accepts school personnel									
5. Interacts cooperatively with others									
6. Respects others and their property									
7. Expresses emotions and feelings appropriately									
8. Exhibits self-control regarding aggressive behavior to self or others, i.e. hitting, biting, using obscene language									
9. Defends self appropriately									
10. Is willing to try new activities and skills									
11. Waits to take turns and shares									
12. Uses imitative behavior appropriately									

Comments:

Target Skill #(s): _____ _____ _____

KEY: V = VERBAL PROMPT / GUIDANCE
M = MODEL PROMPT / GUIDANCE
P = PHYSICAL PROMPT / GUIDANCE
I/E = INCONSISTENT OR EMERGING

CHILD'S NAME: _____

SKILL	PRETEST DATE:			MIDYEAR DATE:			POST TEST DATE:		
SELF MANAGEMENT SKILLS	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E	YES	NO	I/E
1. Eats lunch or snack with minimal assistance									
2. Is aware of/attends to appearance, i.e. keeps nose clean, adjusts clothing									
3. Locates and uses restroom									
4. Cares for bathroom needs									
5. Puts on/takes off outer clothing with minimal assistance									
6. Makes transition between classroom and transportation with minimal assistance									
7. Seeks out adult if hurt or cannot handle social situations									
8. Is aware of obvious dangers and avoids them									
9. Locates own possessions and returns them to appropriate place									

Comments:

Target Skill #(s): _____ _____ _____

General Comments:

KEY: V = VERBAL PROMPT / GUIDANCE
M = MODEL PROMPT / GUIDANCE
P = PHYSICAL PROMPT / GUIDANCE
I/E = INCONSISTENT OR EMERGING